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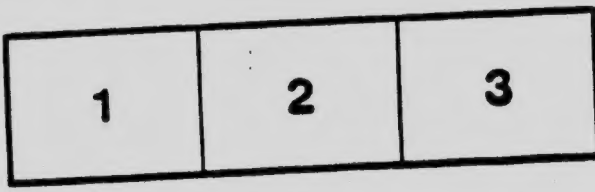

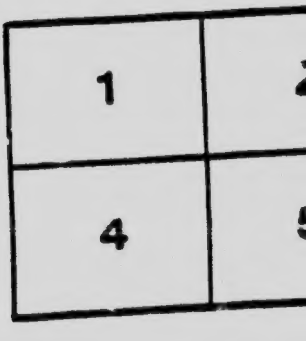

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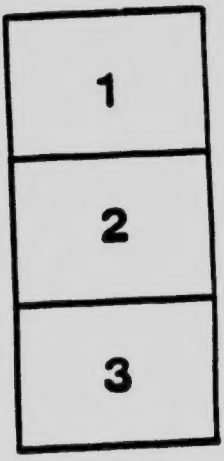

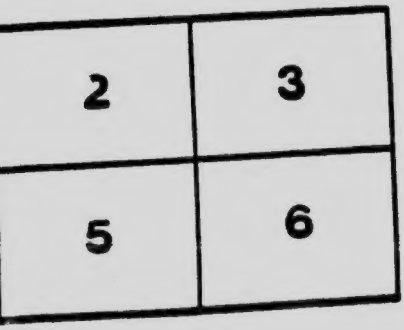

CANADA

The Debates of the Senate

OFFICIAL REPORT

SPEECH

OF

HON. GEO. H. BRADBURY

SENATOR

ON

THE AWARDING OF HIS PENSION AS RETIRED LIEUT.-COLONEL

In the Senate of Canada, Ottawa, on Thursday, May 23, 1918.

THE PENSION OF LIEUT.-COLONEL BRADBURY.

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE.

On the Orders of the Day:

Hon. G. H. BRADBURY: I desire to call the attention of the House to a matter of privilege, a matter to which I would have referred some time ago had it not been for the fact that I was expecting a statement to be made in another place. It seems that the session is likely to close to-day, and, as the matter has not been brought up, I desire at this stage to say a few words upon it. I refer to the pension which was granted to me by the Board of Pension Commissioners. The Ottawa Citizen of May 9 makes this statement:

> **Pension Exemples which cause some Commons Comment—Senator is given 80 per cent "Boarding"—Mr. Bradbury, aged 59, Raised Battalion—Was in France Two Weeks.**
>
> **Senator Bradbury was twice boarded. The first board found him 75 per cent disabled from competition "in the untrained labour market" (he is in his fifty-ninth year), and declared that two-thirds of this disability was due to service. It, therefore, recommended him a fifty per cent disability pension of $69.40 per month—**

I would like to draw the attention of honourable gentlemen to the fact that this is only a six-months pension, not a permanent pension.

> **—for the period of six months. Senator Bradbury complained about the finding of the commission's board and demanded that another sit on his case. The second board which sat in Montreal found him 80 per cent disabled, the entire disablement being due to service, and declared that the disablement was permanent. Its recommendation has not yet been acted upon.**

I desire to say, in the first place, that I never demanded a second board; in fact, I never demanded any board; I never asked for a pension. I was boarded out as a colonel on leave, as every colonel who is on leave will be boarded out.

The history of the case is simply this. I started to raise my battalion on November 5, 1915. I may say to this honourable House that those who knew me, knew that I was never in better health in my life, and I had been in good health for years previous to that. I raised this battalion, consisting of over 1,250 men, to full strength inside of sixty days. I was in training all winter and all of the next spring and summer. I took my battalion to camp Hughes early in May of 1916, and trained there until the latter days of August, before I had the slightest symptom of any trouble. That was, as you will see, ten months after I had enlisted. The inference to be drawn from the way the Citizen puts the case is that I had got some special treatment. I think it is unfair that the press of the country should take a fling at a man who has done his duty, because he is in public life, and make it appear that, either as a member of the other House or as a senator, I had got some special treatment.

I do not think that a man should be penalized simply because he is a member of Parliament or a Senator.

With all due deference to what has been said in another place, I desire to emphasize the fact that I never asked for a pension; I never asked for a board; I never refused to be boarded a second time. What took place was this: I was ordered by the military authorities to report to a board in Ottawa. I forget the dates; they are immaterial. I reported to that board and was examined in order that it might be determined whether I should be retired or kept on leave. When I came back to Canada on the 25th of December, 1916, the first thing I did on my arrival—I think it was the second day after I arrived in Ottawa—was to write a letter to the military authorities asking them to grant me leave of absence, with the distinct understanding that I was to be struck off the pay-list. That letter is on record. So I was a colonel on leave for nearly a year. The military authorities, in the natural course of events, had to deal with my case to see whether they should continue me on leave or retire me; and for that purpose I was summoned by the military authorities to appear before a medical board. I did that, and when the medical board examined me they ascertained my disability, and according to law they had to report that disability to the pension board. The pension board could do nothing else than to deal with the case according to the pension list arranged by Parliament.

When the finding of that board was brought in, declaring that I had a 75 per cent disability, but adding a rider to the effect that some of my disability existed prior to the time I enlisted, I resented that and went to Colonel Belton, who was, I think, chief medical adviser of the pension board, and pointed out to him that the medical board had no authority or justification for making that statement, because I was in the pink of condition, had never been in better health in my life than I was when I undertook to raise my battalion, and continued in that state of health for over ten months after I had enlisted; that I had been in good health for 25 years previous to that, except for a time a few years earlier when, as honourable gentlemen who were then sitting in the other House may remember, I was threatened with appendicitis. At that time I went to Montreal and was examined by Dr. Lafleur, who knew all about my condition, and who is on record regarding my present condition. What I said to colonel Belton, and I desire to repeat it to this honourable House, was: "Colonel Belton, I have not come to you in my own interest; I do not give a fig for your pension; I have come to you, though, in the interest of 1,200 men whom I have taken overseas, and I want to know whether, when those men come back crippled, or wounded, or rheumatic from their heels to their head, or suffering from lung trouble or something else through exposure, you are going to say to them: 'Yes, you have a great disability; you have 75 per cent or 100 per cent disability; but you must have had some of that disability prior to the time of your enlistment with the 108th Battalion.'" I desire to say to this honourable House and to the country that if that is possible it will be a standing disgrace to Canada, because every one of my men—and it was the same with other battalions—were examined by my doctor when they joined the battalion before being passed into the service. When, about six weeks or two months after I started to recruit, it was assembled at Selkirk, the battalion was again boarded and any defects existing were discovered and dealt with. Then, when we arrived at Camp Hughes, my battalion was boarded by a board selected by General Hughes, who was the commander of the camp. The 108th Battalion was boarded four different times before it went overseas, and I think every other battalion at camp Hughes was treated in a similar manner. That being so, honourable gentlemen, I contend that this country is in honour bound to accept every one of those men as being fit, and must accept responsibility for any injuries these men have received on service. It will be unfair, it will be a disgrace, to say to any of those men: "Oh, yes, you were injured, you have a great disability, but you must have had some of that disability before you went overseas with Colonel Bradbury." I am speaking now in the interest of the men of all battalions. As far as I am personally concerned, I do not care a fig for the pension. I say to the Government from my place in this House that if they desire to change the law and make it impossible for the colonel of a battalion who is a member of Parliament or a Senator to participate in a pension and wish to penalize me, do so. I will acquiesce; there will be no protest from me; and they can make the law retroactive if they wish.

As to the pension itself, as I stated a moment ago, it is only a six-months pension. I have never received one dollar of it. A cheque for $69 and some cents was

indeed sent to me, but the cheque is lying in my desk at home. The papers came to me wrongly made out—made out to "Lieut. Bradbury." I returned them unsigned, and I have never heard another word from the authorities since.

I want to say a word to show that there was no justification for the position Colonel Belton has taken. There was an attempt made in the committee that sat in the other House to show that I thought there was some personal motive in the action of the board that boarded me first. I want to say that I did not know one of the gentlemen who boarded me; I never spoke to one of them in my life before that time. They could have had nothing against me, and I could have had nothing against them. So the inference that it has been tried to create, that I refused to be boarded by them again, is absolutely unfounded and untrue. I had already been boarded by this board two or three weeks before, and when I made my protest against the finding I did it, not on my own account, because I do not care about the pension, but because I was thinking of the men I had taken overseas. It is not reasonable to suppose that an appeal from that board would mean an examination by the same board again, but that is the inference that is sought to be created. There was no suggestion of that kind made. Dr. Belton did suggest that I should be boarded by consulting physicians. Instead of me demanding another board, as stated in the Citizen, Dr. Belton states in his evidence that, instead of accepting the suggestion he had made, I said that I would take the matter into consideration. That is exactly what happened. Two days after I made the statement that I would take it into consideration I received a telephone message from the board asking me to go before another board, and stating that I might be boarded at any place I liked, and suggesting Toronto. I said that Toronto was a considerable distance to go, and they said, "How would Montreal do?" I said, "If you want me to be boarded again, I will go to Montreal." Two days after that I received the following wire from the Militia authorities in Montreal:

Montreal, April 20.

Lt. Col. George Bradbury,
The Senate, Ottawa.

Board of Pension Commissioners desire you to report Montreal district office, 304 Drummond Building, either April 26th or May 6th, after 3 o'clock, in order to be medically boarded. If not convenient wire this omce stating date suitable.

This was an order from the Militia authorities that I report. I carried out the order and did report there. I had never in my life seen the gentlemen who boarded me in Montreal, and never had any correspondence with them. When they boarded me they found my disability greater than it had been found by the Ottawa board, and, more than that, they found that it was entirely due to the service I had rendered to my country with my battalion. That is the point that I want to establish clearly—that my disability was due to service, and that when men are accepted by the Government as fit men, the rank and file, the men fighting in the trenches, I do not want it to be said by members of my battalion when they return home that I knowing the position the board was taking, was silent on this question. This is a very vital question to these men. They were accepted as fit, and the people of this country expect the Government to take care of those men when they come back, and to give them the pension voted by both Houses, and not to adopt cheeseparing methods, and say: "Yes, you are a very sick man, you have a disability of 75 or 80 per cent, but you must have had some of it before you joined your battalion." That is a cruel and unfair position to take, and one that the people will not stand for.

There is another impression which has been created that I desire to correct. I have noticed that certain senators and others have been under the impression that I, through my position as a Senator, had secured a kind of private board at Montreal and had my disability raised and my position made stronger. These insinuations are quite unfounded. There is not a tittle of evidence or proof in support of them. As I said before, there was not one of the six gentlemen who examined me that I had ever spoken to before in my life, and they knew nothing at all about me.

Just here I want to put on record a letter from Dr. H. A. Lafleur. Every man here knows Dr. Lafleur, of Montreal. I do not suppose there is a medical man in this House or out of it who would say that he is not a competent man to diagnose a case properly. When I took ill first, I went to Dr. Lafleur when I came back to Canada. I did not know what was wrong with me. The first illness I had was ten months after I enlisted. I had blood pressure. It was overstated in the examination of the first board, for which I am perhaps responsible. When I think I said it was 169 I should

have said it was 160. The doctor put it at 170, which makes quite a difference. I went overseas and was nearly three months in England before I had any further trouble. Then I took what they call angina pectoris. The doctors seemed to confuse the two, the angina pectoris and the blood pressure, with arterial sclerosis. My trouble is agina pectoris. Dr. Lafleur wrote on January 9, 1918, saying :

Hon. George H. Bradbury,

Ottawa, Ont.

Dear Col. Bradbury:

Regarding your physical condition which I have had the opportunity of observing since April, 1917, I am of the opinion that the symptoms of which you complain for the last eighteen months or more point to angina pectoris, and I believe that this condition necessitates your curtailing your activities as much as possible. I would advise you to avoid particularly fatigue and physical exertion and worry and excitement of any sort. I consider that you should be relieved of military duties entirely, and that all you can safely undertake is attention to your business and your senatorial duties.

I have several letters here from the doctor and from the sanitarium, but I will not read them. As honourable gentlemen will understand, it is not agreable to parade this matter before this House. I am doing it only to point out the true condition of affairs.

On February 4, 1918, Dr. Lafleur wrote again. I may explain to the House how I came to get this letter. After I was boarded in Ottawa—the board had Dr. Lafleur's letter before them—the board said: "He does not say whether he thinks your trouble originated with your work in connection with your battalion or not." I said, "Dr. Lafleur has told me that it did." I asked him what caused the trouble, and he asked me what I had been doing. I said, that I had raised a battalion, and he said, "No doubt that is what caused your trouble." The board asked me to write a letter to him asking him to express an opinion. Here is what he says in his letter of February 4, 1918:

Hon. George H. Bradbury,

The Senate, Ottawa.

Dear Sir:

In answer to your letter of February 1st, I may say that I believe the trouble you are now suffering from—angina pectoris—had its origin in the physical exertion and mental worry attendant upon the raising, training and taking overseas of your battalion.

I want to put that on record because of the statement that has been made, that it takes at least a year, likely more, for trouble to develop.

There are one or two other statements made by Dr. Belton, to which I feel I must refer. Speaking of the board that had already examined me, someone asked him: "As a medical man would not you say that the men who had examined the man formerly and had passed upon his disability would be better able to say whether he was better or worse, on a subsequent occasion?" The answer to that question was "yes." The inference drawn from that was that I had declined to go before the same board, which is absolutely untrue. There was no suggestion that I should do so. Then, again:

Speaking for yourself, you see no reason why the medical board should not have re-examined Colonel Bradbury?

And the answer is;

Colonel Bradbury did object to that board.

I want to state most emphatically that that statement is not correct. I did not object, and he did not suggest that I should go before the same board again. The only demur I made was when he suggested that I should be examined by a board of consulting physicians— and even then I did not object; I just said that I would take it into consideration. Another statement he makes is that some Mr. Mills said that Colonel Bradbury had been a sick man for many years, and that in any further dealings he had in this matter no doubt that would be on his mind. Is not that a rather peculiar position for a man holding the office he holds to take, if he does not depend on his professional knowledge without taking what some one told him on the street?

I think I am justified in bringing this matter before the House, because there has been a false impression spread throughout this country that I have been seeking for special consideration, which is absolutely incorrect. My interest is in the men that I took overseas and the others in a like position. Personally I am not concerned. But I do say to honourable gentlemen that it would be unfair of me to create a precedent so that my brother colonels who are overseas doing their duty, as I tried to do mine, could not claim a pension when they came back. It is not right that because I am a senator I should not participate in a pension; but there will be no protest from me if the Government passes a law to the contrary, making it retroactive if they wish. Anything that has been paid will be handed back. All that ever came to me was a cheque for $69, which has never been cashed.